Annual Activity Report of the Rural Secretariat Executive Council 2007-08

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1. *Message from the Minister*

As Minister Responsible for the Rural Secretariat and in accordance with the Provincial Government's commitment to accountability, I hereby submit the 2007-08 Activity Report of the Rural Secretariat which details the activities of the Secretariat from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008. This annual activity report was prepared under my direction and I am accountable for its preparation and the actual results reported.

The Rural Secretariat was established in 2004 and focuses on the sustainable development of the province's regions. It facilitates information sharing, informed dialogue and collaboration within regions. It encourages integrated thinking and shared decision making on regional issues. The Rural Secretariat engages citizens and stakeholders, including its Provincial and Regional Councils, in discussions with the provincial government about long-term regional sustainability.

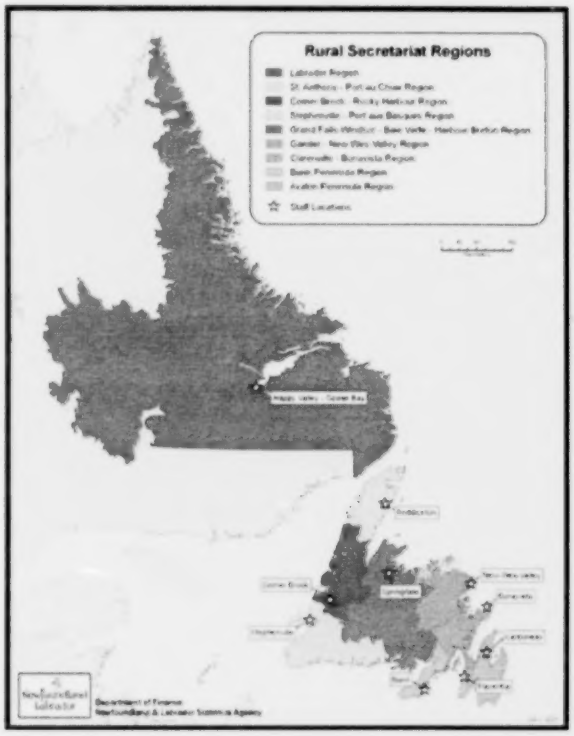
In November 2007, the Rural Secretariat hosted the *Visions to Actions – A Roadmap to 2020* conference. This event provided a forum for discussion of regional and rural issues with the Premier, Ministers and key decision makers.

Six broad policy themes were identified at the conference. These themes, with an emphasis on youth retention throughout the approach, included stimulating economic activity, investing in education and skills development, providing high quality publicly funded programs and services, investing in infrastructure, ensuring that municipal governance reflects changing local level needs, and developing partnerships to build regional and rural cooperation and collaboration. These themes will be incorporated into the work of the provincial government as we move forward toward 2020.

I look forward to the continued work of the Rural Secretariat and its Councils.

TREVOR TAYLOR
Minister
MHA, The Straits and White Bay North

2. Organizational Overview



The Rural Secretariat is an entity within the Executive Council of the provincial government that focuses on the sustainable development of the province's regions. It facilitates information sharing, informed dialogue and collaboration within regions. It encourages integrated thinking and shared decision making on regional issues. The Rural Secretariat engages citizens to become more informed on regional issues in policy development. It involves citizens, through its citizen-based Provincial and Regional Councils, in discussions with government about long-term regional sustainability.

Within the Provincial Government, the Rural Secretariat:

- Raises awareness of rural issues among departments;
- Participates on inter-departmental policy development committees that are addressing issues of importance to rural areas;
- Practices and supports implementation of a Rural Lens; and
- Participates in a range of research exercises and works with industry, community and special interest groups on matters that impact regions and rural areas.

Each year since 2004, the Rural Secretariat has hosted an annual event to bring together Cabinet Ministers, senior officials, Regional and Provincial Council members, business representatives and other stakeholders to discuss regional and rural opportunities and issues and to discuss policies, programs and investments that impact regions and rural areas. To date, events have been held at Port Blandford, Marble Mountain, Rocky Harbour and Gander. These events have helped inform the discussions that the Rural Secretariat is developing between the provincial government and citizens.

The Rural Secretariat supports citizenship engagement in its nine planning regions across the province (see page 3). A citizen-based Regional Council has been established in each region. Each Council brings together a cross-section of volunteers balanced by gender,

age and community size. Each also ensures that economic, social, cultural, and environmental perspectives are represented in its discussions. Each Council meets at least four times per year and is responsible for completing an Activity Plan and Annual Report. (A membership list is available at: www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/regionalcouncil.asp See Appendix B for the mandate of the Regional Councils.)

The Rural Secretariat also supports a Provincial Council. This Council is a forum for citizens to directly engage with policy makers. It has members from each of the nine Regional Councils as well as representatives from 10 key stakeholder and interest groups. The Council meets at least twice per year and is also responsible for completing an Activity Plan and Annual Report. (A membership list is available at: www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/provincialcouncil.asp See Appendix B for the mandate of the Provincial Council.)

Rural Secretariat staff work with the Regional and Provincial Councils, including identification of priorities for discussion with the provincial government. Councils' priorities form the basis for their Activity Plans. Councils' Activity Plans and Annual reports can be found at: www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/publications.asp

The Rural Secretariat also provides support to the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Regional Development. The Clerk of the Executive Council chairs the committee. Through this committee, Deputy Ministers meet to develop cross-sectoral and cross-departmental approaches to regional and rural issues. They also seek to ensure that policy and programs are coordinated and complementary. Deputy Ministers attend events hosted by the Rural Secretariat and are engaged in the work of the Secretariat.

To carry out its work, the Rural Secretariat has a permanent staff complement of 16 positions. As of March 31, 2008, eight staff were female, six were male and there were two vacancies. (See Appendix C for an Organizational Chart)

- Assistant Deputy Minister
- Director of Regional Partnership Development
- Director of Partnership Research and Analysis
- Manager of Partnership Administration
- 10 Regional Partnership Planners
- Policy Analyst
- Clerk Typist III

Ten of the 16 positions are located in regional offices aligned with the nine regions of the Rural Secretariat. Regional Partnership Planners are located in Carbonear, Placentia, Bonavista, Burin, New-Wes-Valley, Springdale, Corner Brook, Stephenville, Roddickton and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Most offices are co-located with the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development or the College of the North Atlantic.
Staff development and retention is a priority for the Rural Secretariat. The Secretariat arranges for regular staff meetings throughout the year and participates in training

sessions offered through the Centre for Learning and Development. For example, in June 2007, the Secretariat organized a five-day training seminar at Gros Morne. This seminar, led by officials from the Ontario-based Tamarack Institute, focused on facilitation training and the citizen engagement process. The Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development and the College of the North Atlantic also participated in training sessions. Staff also attend relevant conferences and information sessions within and outside the province.

To accomplish its mandate, the Rural Secretariat expended approximately $1.67 million in 2007-08 (see Section 13). In 2007-08, the Secretariat's budget funded:

- Salary and operating costs for the Rural Secretariat Office, Confederation Building;
- Salary and operating costs for Regional Partnership Planners and their offices;
- Operating costs for nine regional councils of the Rural Secretariat;
- Operating costs for the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat;
- Salary and operating costs for the Community Accounts in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency.

3. Mandate

The Rural Secretariat's mandate is to:

- Promote the well-being of all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador through a comprehensive and coordinated approach to economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of regional development.
- Act as the focal point for government to work with local and regional partners to build strong and dynamic regions and communities.
- Ensure that regional concerns are considered throughout the provincial government and promoted at the federal level.
- Carry out research and analysis of economic and social issues affecting all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Help communities and regions identify and take advantage of growth opportunities.

4. *Lines of Business*

The Rural Secretariat's two lines of business, as outlined in its 2006-08 Activity plan, correlate with its strategic directions (see Appendix A):

- **Partnership Development**. The Rural Secretariat engages citizens and coordinates the development of partnerships to focus on sustainable regional development and provide direct consideration of regional issues in the development of public policy.

- **Regional Impact Awareness and Action**. The Rural Secretariat conducts research and analysis, and provides informed advice on opportunities and challenges in all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

5. *Values*

The core values explain the character of the organization. The core values of the Rural Secretariat are as follows:

Collaboration	Each person is committed to working together effectively.
Creativity	Each person seeks and supports new ideas and approaches.
Empowerment	Each person is responsible for participating in discussions, making informed decisions and taking personal responsibility for their contributions.
Inclusion	Each person acknowledges others' views and perspectives and has the right/opportunity to express their own.
Learning Culture	Each individual is recognized and valued for the skills that they bring and is encouraged to continue to learn.
Transparency	Each individual gives and shares open and objective advice based on sound information and principles.
Trust	Each person is open and supportive when participating in partnerships and follows through on requests and commitments.

6. Primary Clients

The primary clients of the Rural Secretariat include the Regional and Provincial Councils, community groups, Regional Economic Development Boards, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, and departments and agencies within the provincial government. On a broader basis, the client base of the Rural Secretariat includes all the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Through shared commitments within the provincial government, other departments and agencies are also primary partners of the Rural Secretariat.

7. Vision

The vision of the Rural Secretariat is of sustainable regions with healthy, educated prosperous people living in safe, inclusive communities.

8. Mission

The mission statement identifies the priority focus area of the Minister over the next two planning cycles. It represents the key longer-term result that the Minister and the Rural Secretariat will be working towards as they move forward on the strategic directions of the provincial government. The statement also identifies the measure and indicators that will assist both the entity and the public in monitoring and evaluating success.

By 2011, the Rural Secretariat will have implemented effective tools and processes required to ensure the consistent and formalized consideration of regional impacts in the development of public policy.

In its 2006-08 Activity plan, the Rural Secretariat identified one measure and nine indicators to monitor implementation of its Mission. Given that the Secretariat was a relatively new entity in 2006 and that its focus has evolved and will continue to evolve, its indicators are revised in its 2008-11 Activity Plan. The revised indicators, as listed below, encompass and build upon those identified in 2006-08. The Secretariat will report on the achievement of the Mission in its 2010-11 Annual Report.

Measure	
Regional priorities are communicated and advanced within the provincial government	
Indicators 2006-08 Activity Plan	**Indicators 2008-11 Activity Plan**
Regional priorities are communicated and advanced within government Rural Lens is used by government departments in public policy and program development Rural Secretariat staff have participated on interdepartmental committees	Departments are supported to ensure that regional and rural impacts are considered in decision making processes
Citizen engagement process is implemented to enhance communication between government and citizens	Citizen engagement process is implemented to enhance communication between the provincial government and citizens
Regional and Provincial Councils are established Regional and Provincial Councils are supported to provide input into government priorities Meetings of the Regional and Provincial Councils are scheduled and facilitated Meetings are organized between Cabinet and the Provincial Council Meetings are organized between the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Regional Development and the Provincial Council Regional and local area information and targeted research is provided	Regional and Provincial Councils are established and supported to identify regional and rural policy and development priorities, and to provide input and advice to the provincial government with respect to these priorities

9. *Shared Commitments*

In establishing the Rural Secretariat, the provincial government structured a formal mechanism to ensure matters impacting regions and rural areas are considered in decision making processes. The Secretariat also seeks to enhance the capacity of citizens, stakeholders and interests to address these matters. In this context, the Secretariat plays a coordinating and advisory role rather than delivery of programs and services.

The Rural Secretariat seeks to ensure that policies, decisions and investments are consistent with the provincial government's regional sustainability framework. This framework seeks to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity and choice to live, work and raise families in rural areas. To do this, it seeks to ensure that all citizens have access, within reasonable commuting distance, to employment opportunities and a range of private and public sector services.

The Rural Secretariat believes that this can be achieved through collaboration with departments and agencies that have mandates to implement policies, programs, services and investments that impact and have implications for regions and rural areas. Since its inception in 2004, the Rural Secretariat has collaborated on a range of strategies, initiatives and policy development processes. For example, it works with:

- Innovation, Trade and Rural Development (INTRD) on matters related to regional economic development and telecommunications development;
- INTRD, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Natural Resources and Tourism, Culture and Recreation on matters related to specific industry development and industry renewal;
- Human Resources, Labour and Employment (HRLE) and Education on matters related to educational services, skills development, youth and labour market development;
- HRLE on matters related to poverty reduction and immigration;
- Health and Community Services on matters related to wellness, aging and seniors;
- Environment and Conservation on matters related to energy conservation, community planning and adaptation, and the *Sustainable Development Act*;
- Municipal Affairs and Transportation and Works with respect to matters such as major infrastructure decisions and shared municipal services;
- Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Women's Policy Office and the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat on matters related to their mandate as well as the Violence Prevention Initiative and the Northern Strategic Plan; and
- HRLE and Finance on matters related to the development and provision of information to assist departments as well as Regional Councils, citizens and other stakeholders and interests to plan and make informed decisions.

The introduction of the Rural Lens, effective April 1, 2008, will further ensure that regional and rural considerations are accounted for in decision-making processes. Planning work related to the Rural Lens was implemented in 2007-08 (see Section 8, Goal 2).

10. Report on Performance

The *Transparency and Accountability Act* requires all public bodies to take into account the provincial government's publicly communicated strategic directions when preparing performance-based annual reports.

The activities and performance of the Rural Secretariat with respect to each of the goals as outlined below, is in support of the provincial government's strategic directions for the Rural Secretariat (Appendix A). Within the various regions of the province, the Secretariat's performance allowed for the development of new partnerships with other government departments, stakeholders and citizens at the regional level, supported the development of new regional forums to discuss citizens' perspectives on regional and rural sustainability. Within provincial government, the Rural Secretariat is increasingly viewed as a valuable resource with respect to regional and rural perspectives and how these perspectives impact decision-making processes. The Council recognizes that these strategic directions are long term in nature and believes that its activities in 2008-09 and beyond will further support these directions.

The Rural Secretariat's 2006-08 Activity Plan outlined two goals to be achieved by March 31, 2008. As a new entity within the provincial government established in 2004, the goals reflect structural elements (e.g., the need to establish councils and facilitate meetings between councils and the provincial government) as well as process-related elements (e.g., development of information products, and support to councils and other provincial government departments). The Rural Secretariat's issues, goals, objectives, measures and indicators for 2008-09 are identified in its 2008-11 Activity Plan (www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/publications.asp). These goals build on those of 2006-08 and reflect the growth of the organization since 2004.

The Activity Plan also contained a set of objectives, measure and indicators for 2006-07. In its 2006-07 Annual Report, the Secretariat outlined its objectives, measure and indicators for 2007-08. This section outlines the progress of the Rural Secretariat in meeting these commitments, including how the objectives for 2007-08 met the Goal for 2006-08.

Goal 1: Forum for Communication

By 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have implemented an effective forum for communication between government and citizens.

Measure: Implemented an effective forum.

2007-08 Objective: By March 31, 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have supported the Provincial and Regional Councils to make informed policy advice and recommendations to government.

2007-08 Measure: Provincial and Regional Councils are supported.

The Rural Secretariat is a new entity within the provincial government. It was established in 2004, its nine Regional Councils were established in 2005, and its Provincial Council was established in 2006. Given that these processes were established during the 2006-08 planning period, there is significant overlap between activities that allowed the Secretariat to meet the Objective for 2007-08 with activities to meet the Goal for 2006-08. For purposes of reporting, they are combined (two specific differences are noted). Rural Secretariat staff facilitated forums for Councils to share information such as demographics, provincial government initiatives and regional strategies. This helped build knowledge at the Council level.

Indicator	Accomplishments
Regional and local area information and targeted research is made available to Council members, government departments and community groups	*The first three bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • Socio-economic profiles for each of the nine regions of the Rural Secretariat were developed in 2006-07 and updated in 2007-08 as more recent information became available (e.g., Census 2006, taxfiler information, revised demographic projections). These profiles were widely distributed within and external to government. • Socio-economic profiles for Consolidated Census Sub-divisions within each Rural Secretariat region were also developed in 2006-07 and updated in 2007-08. These profiles contained local level information within each region. Similarly, these profiles were widely distributed within and external to government. • Infrastructure maps, developed in 2006-07, were expanded and circulated in 2007-08. Additional information included additional types of services (e.g., Community

Indicator	Accomplishments
	Access Program sites, Legal Aid offices, addictions services, etc.) • Targeted information developed by other departments was circulated in 2007-08. These include regional demographic profiles (Finance, *www.economics.gov.nl.ca/population/regionaldemographicprofiles.asp)* and labour market profiles (Human Resources, Labour and Employment, www.lmiworks.nl.ca/lmi/ reportData.aspx)
Regional and provincial councils are established *This Indicator is included for the 2006-08 Goal only; it is not included as a 2007-08 Indicator for activity during that year*	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • Regional Councils were established in 2005 and the Provincial Council in 2006. • In 2007-08, each Regional Council developed a regional vision document and regional priorities for discussion with government. • These documents served as the basis for each Council's 2008-11 Activity Plan.
Citizen engagement process is continued *Note that the 2006-08 Goal Indicator was worded as follows: "Citizen engagement process is initiated"*	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal. The common themes identified in the fourth bullet reflect discussions from activity in both years.* • About 900 individuals attended citizen engagement sessions. This compares to approximately 100 individuals in 2006-07 (December 2006 to March 2007 only). • Process engaged a broad range of citizens – municipal leaders, youth, community groups, business owners, seniors, etc. • The objective is to build capacity and transfer knowledge with a focus on long term planning • Three common themes emerged: (i) youth have strong views and are less caught up in the "way it was"; (ii) they have a broad understanding of the need for change; and (iii) they believe discussions need to be solutions-based • Regional specific results are contained in the 2007-08 Annual Report for each Regional Council

Indicator	Accomplishments
Regional and Provincial Councils are supported to provide input into Government priorities Meetings of the Regional and Provincial Councils are scheduled and facilitated	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • Regional Planners coordinated and supported the work of the Regional Councils, including meeting preparation, meeting facilitation, inviting departmental officials and non-governmental entities to attend meetings, and preparation of documents for Council review. Regional Planners also coordinated citizen engagement sessions. Provincial Office staff performed a similar function for the Provincial Council. • Each regional Council met at least four times in 2006-07 and 2007-08. Over the 2006-08 period, a total of 90 Regional Council meetings were held. • In 2006-07, 48 Regional Council meetings were held. In 2007-08, 42 meetings were held (not including the *Visions to Actions* conference). • The Provincial Council met once in 2006-07 and four times in 2007-08
Meetings are organized between Cabinet and the Provincial Council.	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • In 2006-07, several Provincial Council members attended the Secretariat's annual event at Rocky Harbour. • In 2007-08, the Provincial Council met with Cabinet during the *Visions to Actions* conference. • Additionally, the Provincial Council met with Minister Taylor once in 2006-07and twice in 2007-08.
Meetings are organized between the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Regional Development and the Provincial Council.	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • Deputy Ministers attended the 2006-07 event at Rocky Harbour and the 2007-08 *Visions to Actions* conference. Deputy Ministers fully participated in each event. • The Clerk of the Executive Council and the Deputy Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Transportation and Works met with the Provincial Council in 2007-08.

Goal 2: Regional Perspectives in Policy Development

By 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have advanced knowledge of regional perspectives in public policy development.

Measure: Advanced regional perspectives.

2007-08 Objective: By March 31, 2008, the Rural Secretariat will have developed formal mechanisms to allow for the consideration of regional issues and trends in the development of government policies and programs.

2007-08 Measure: Formal mechanisms are developed.

The Rural Secretariat is a new entity within the provincial government. Given that its structure was developed since that time and that the implementation of this Goal is a long term process, there is significant overlap between activities that allowed the Secretariat to meet the Objective for 2007-08 with activities to meet the Goal for 2006-08 (one specific difference is noted). Staff of the Rural Secretariat helped Councils develop an increased understanding of the policy process in the provincial government by using the Rural Lens documents for regional discussion. Staff provided presentations within the provincial government on implementing the Rural Lens in the decision making process within the provincial government.

Indicator	Accomplishments
Training on the use of the Rural Lens is provided to provincial government departments Advice is provided to provincial government departments on the use of the Rural Lens.	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal. Activity in 2006-07 was focused on the development of the Rural Lens tool as outlined in the Secretariat's 2006-07 annual report.* • This task was fulfilled in collaboration with the Centre of Learning and Development. Approximately 400 officials received training on the use of the Rural Lens in early 2008. • Most training sessions were held at St. John's. Regional sessions were held at Corner Brook, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Grand Falls-Windsor. • Upon request, staff provided input and advice to Cabinet Secretariat and provincial government departments and agencies in decision-making processes. The level of activity increased during and after Rural Lens training.

Indicator	Accomplishments
Rural Secretariat staff will have participated on interdepartmental committees and advanced regional perspectives.	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • Staff participated on a range of interdepartmental committees and initiatives in both 2006-07 and 2007-08. Examples of initiatives covering each fiscal year include the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Aging and Seniors Strategy, Government Broadband Initiative, Coastal and Oceans Management, Northern Strategic Plan, Wellness Strategy, and the Violence Prevention Strategy. (See Section 9 of this report for more detail.) • Staff provided input and advice to departments on a number of issue-specific tasks in both 2006-07 and 2007-08, e.g., minimum wage review in 2007-08. • Over the full 2006-08 period, staff participated in a range of regional partner networks involving other stakeholders and interests such as the federal government, regional health, education, economic and social development groups and associations, and other community groups. This process benefited the Rural Secretariat as well as its Regional Councils in terms of improved understanding regional perspectives of issues and opportunities in regions and rural areas. Staff worked both the provincial and regional level to identify and advance policy, program and investment opportunities and initiatives in regions and rural areas. • Over the full 2006-08 period, staff participated on a number of initiatives in cooperation with municipalities. This process also benefited the Rural Secretariat, as well as its Regional Councils in terms of understanding sub-regional and municipal perspectives. • Staff participated on a range of committees and projects led by non-governmental agents. Examples covering the full 2006-08 period include projects led by the MUN Harris Centre (Mobilizing Knowledge for Sustainable Regions, Rural-Urban Linkages Project), the federal government (Rural Team Newfoundland and Labrador), and community-led organizations (Labrador Aboriginal Research Committee, Bridging the Gap, Integrated Hub Model).

Indicator	Accomplishments
Regional and Provincial Councils are supported	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • Regional Planners arranged for other departments to attend and present at Regional Council meetings. Participating departments included Innovation, Trade and Rural Development, Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Education, and Natural Resources. Officials from Education districts and Regional Integrated Health Authorities also attended various meetings. • Regional Planners worked with the MUN Harris Centre to strengthen linkages between the Regional Councils and the Centre. This work commenced in 2006-07 and was expanded in 2007-08. The work included the development of an Intranet site, housed by the Harris Centre, which contains research and related materials to assist Councils in their work.
Enhanced use of Community Accounts is facilitated *This Indicator is included for the 2006-08 Goal only; it is not included as a 2007-08 Indicator for activity during that year*	*The bullets below reflect activity in 2006-07 to meet the commitments of the 2006-08 Goal.* • Regional Planners organized and participated in regional training sessions for provincial government employees in 2006-07 and 2007-08. On average, five to seven sessions are organized per year. Planners also highlighted the Community Accounts during citizen engagement sessions and in meetings with regional stakeholders. • During 2006-07, a committee comprised of representatives from the Rural Secretariat, the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency and the MUN Harris Centre was established to facilitate the enhanced use of the Community Accounts. The committee submitted its report in September 2006. • In order to maximize use of resources to administer and promote use of the Community Accounts, the Rural Secretariat will transfer its budget allocation for the Accounts to the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency beginning fiscal year 2008-09.

11. Additional Highlights and Accomplishments

In addition to the points raised in Section 8, three additional highlights and accomplishments are worthy of mention. These are consistent with the Rural Secretariat's strategic directions and mandate, and will serve to inform the work of the Secretariat during the 2008-11 period.

Visions to Actions – A Roadmap to 2020 conference

The 2007 Speech From the Throne committed that "…[the provincial government would] bring together all regional and provincial council members of the Rural Secretariat, the three orders of Government and senior public officials for a fully-interactive conference under the theme "*Visions to Actions: A Roadmap to 2020*".

The conference brought together the Premier, Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers, citizens (represented by Rural Secretariat Regional Councils and the Provincial Council), federal and municipal officials, and stakeholder groups such as NLREDA, post-secondary institutions, youth organizations and the Community Services Council. In total, 195 participants attended.

The conference included small group breakout sessions organized around six priorities themes as identified by Regional Councils: investing in economic activity; investing in skills development; investing in infrastructure and program and service delivery; municipal services and delivery; community leadership and participation; and youth retention. The conference report is available at www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/publications.asp

Of particular note was the panel discussion on youth retention. This session brought forward a youth voice to one of the key rural challenges facing the province and provided an opportunity to inform the provincial government's youth-related policies and programs. It served as a starting point by which Regional Councils could more intensely engage youth in their work, and it provided government with advice on how to stem out-migration from rural areas. It also served as a key starting point from which the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment began to structure its Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy.1

1 The provincial government announced the development of this strategy on June 5, 2008. The Canadian Policy Research Networks, a keynote organization at the *Visions to Actions* conference, will engage youth in a wide-ranging youth consultation and deliberative dialogue project. In addition, a 19-member Youth Advisory Panel will provide input and guidance and assist with the project's research design and development of materials. These initiatives will complement and support the overall development of the strategy. Further information is available at www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2008/exec/0605n08.htm

Community Linkages Survey

The Rural Secretariat, in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency and Statistics Canada, is developing a community linkages survey. This will be a household-based survey that will seek to identify where people live versus where they work, purchase goods and services, and access financial, medical and other professional services. It will be complemented by administrative data on where people access education and health services.

The survey is designed to fill data gaps required to better target policy and program initiatives, particularly in rural areas. It will allow the provincial government to identify how individuals and towns rely on each other, as well as how these relationships may change over the next several years. In this context, it will provide background information to a range of infrastructure and service delivery decisions. It will also support and inform the Rural-Urban Linkages Project led by the MUN Harris Centre.

Work has been ongoing for almost two years to date. Statistics Canada methodologists have reviewed the survey from a methodological perspective and a survey frame has been designed. Survey implementation is planned for Fall 2008.

Developing Partnerships and Rural Networks

The Rural Secretariat promotes regional collaboration through partnership and network development to advance rural sustainability. These efforts generally involve provincial government departments, the federal government, industry associations, post secondary institutions and community organizations. This approach builds on existing provincial policy and existing provincial strategies such as the Innovation Strategy, the White Paper on Post-Secondary Education, and the Comprehensive Regional Diversification Strategy. It promotes shared regional responsibility for decision making among the provincial government, the private sector and community-based partners. The intended outcome is a more comprehensive approach to regional development initiatives.

A range of partnership and network development initiatives were pursued in 2007-08. The Secretariat worked with the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development, College of the North Atlantic, Community Services Council, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and others to advance collaboration in support of sustainability. For example, initiatives were pursued in manufacturing and agri-foods. In the social sector, the Rural Secretariat partnered with the Community Services Council and the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat to develop a regional cluster-based approach in support of the community-based/volunteer sector. It is expected that partnership and network development initiatives will continue in 2008-09.

12. Opportunities and Challenges

The work of the Rural Secretariat is situated in an operating environment characterized by long-term economic, labour market, social and demographic change. Many of the factors driving change are beyond the direct control of the Rural Secretariat and the provincial government generally. In this context, the Rural Secretariat seeks to both build awareness and knowledge of regional and rural change, and to identify policy initiatives and investment opportunities to assist regions, communities and citizens to adapt to change.

The Rural Secretariat seeks to ensure that the impacts of policy decisions on regions and rural areas are considered in decision-making. The introduction of the Rural Lens is a key opportunity to give effect to this role. As a mandatory tool for departments to use in decision making processes, it will enhance the consideration of regional and rural impacts and implications by ensuring they are considered objectively and comprehensively. The Rural Secretariat is also engaging with departments in a coordinated manner on policy priorities impacting regions and rural areas. The broad challenge will be to ensure that provincial, regional and rural economic, labour market, social and demographic considerations, as well as environmental, cultural and societal values, are fully considered in policy, program, service and infrastructure investment decisions.

There is an increasing understanding among citizens and stakeholders, and within the provincial government, of the intricate and complex linkages between regional sustainability, economic activity, the demographic structure and well-being. The challenge and opportunity is to better articulate, promote and disseminate information that identifies these linkages, as well as identify the necessary policy levers and mechanisms by which to turn regional and rural assets (e.g., natural resources, infrastructure, and human, social and financial capital) into opportunities.

13. Financial Summary

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are un-audited and based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the Year Ended 31 March 2008. Audited financial statements are a requirement at the government level and are made public through the Public Accounts process, however the Rural Secretariat is not required to provide a separate audited financial statement.

	Actual Expenditures 2007-08	Amended Estimates 2007-08	Original Estimates 2007-08
Salaries	$1,240,603	$1,260,000	$1,262,000
Employee Benefits	$3,270	$7,400	$7,400
Transportation and Communications	$256,095	$297,400	$297,400
Supplies	$35,773	$50,000	$50,000
Professional Services	$24,252	$105,000	$120,000
Purchased Services	$106,222	$122,100	$105,700
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	$3,354	$7,500	$7,500
Total	$1,669,569	$1,850,000	$1,850,000

Appendix A – Strategic Directions

1. **Title: Regional Partnership Development**

   Outcome Statement: Stronger and more dynamic regions.

   Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Regional Council in the areas of:

   - Partnership Development
     - Within regions
     - Between government and regions
   - Forum for informed discussion and priority identification that links economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of regional sustainability.

2. **Title: Assessment of Policy on Regional Sustainability**

   Outcome Statement: Improved Government understanding of and response to significant and long-term regional issues.

   Clarifying Statement: This outcome requires systemic intervention by the Regional Council in the areas of:

   - Regional perspectives which can inform the development and implementation of public policy.

Appendix B - Mandates

Mandate of the Regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat

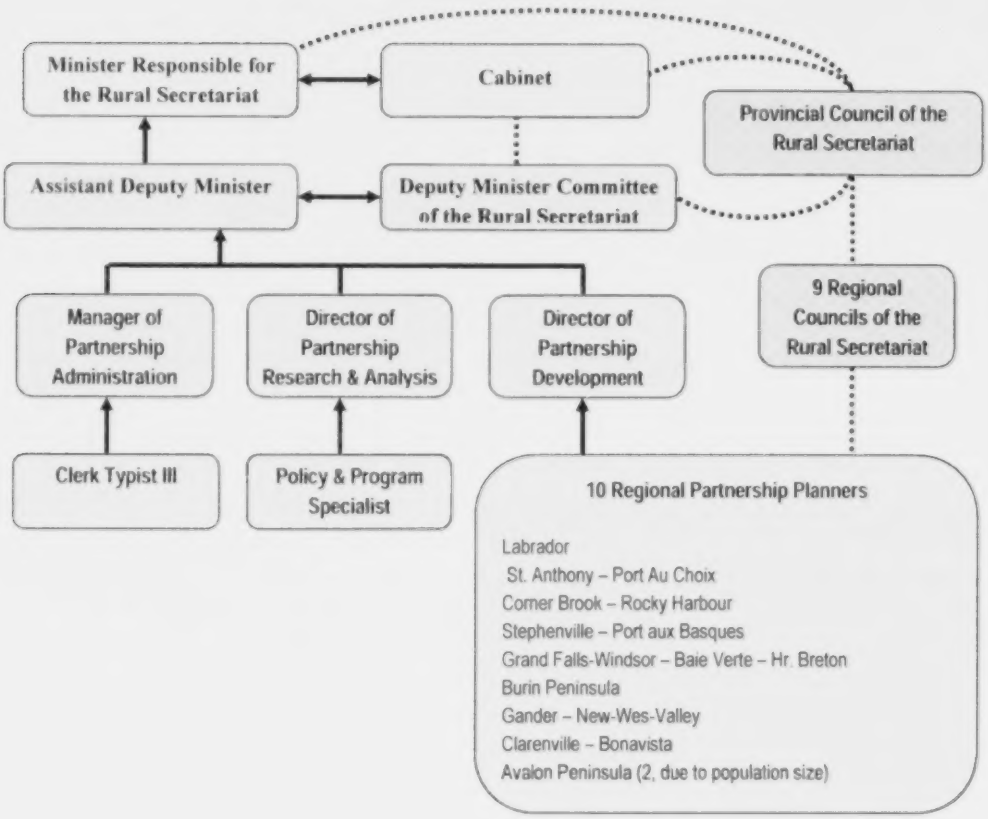
- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities of a region.
- To review key regional economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify policies and programs which either advance, negatively impact or need to be developed to encourage the necessary change.
- To advance regional cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about economic and social measures and to encourage regional partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To nominate an individual to represent the region on the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat.

Mandate of the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat

- To develop a common, evidence-based understanding of the social, economic, environmental and cultural realities facing the province.
- To review key provincial, economic and social measures (e.g. education levels, demographic trends, health status, income levels, EI usage, economic diversity) and to reach agreement on the priorities for change over the next five years.
- To identify and advise government on policies and programs which either advance, negatively impact or need to be developed to encourage the necessary change.
- To advance cooperation through the sharing of information on and discussion about economic and social measures, and to encourage government and community partners to take action on and be accountable for those areas within their mandates.
- To meet twice annually with the provincial Cabinet and deputy ministers to advance regional development priorities.
- To serve as an external sounding board for government for the development of strategies, policies, programs and budget issues that will affect provincial and regional sustainability.

Appendix C – Organizational Structure

Rural Secretariat
Organizational Structure


Minister Responsible for the Rural Secretariat
Cabinet
Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat
Assistant Deputy Minister
Deputy Minister Committee of the Rural Secretariat
Manager of Partnership Administration
Director of Partnership Research & Analysis
Director of Partnership Development
9 Regional Councils of the Rural Secretariat
Clerk Typist III
Policy & Program Specialist
10 Regional Partnership Planners
Labrador
St. Anthony – Port Au Choix
Corner Brook – Rocky Harbour
Stephenville – Port aux Basques
Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Hr. Breton
Burin Peninsula
Gander – New-Wes-Valley
Clarenville – Bonavista
Avalon Peninsula (2, due to population size)

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Brimstone Head, Fogo
Photo compliments of Transportation & Works

Francois
Photo compliments of Transportation & Works

Ski-dooing in Taylor's Gulch, Labrador
Photo compliments of Taracetta Butt

McCallum
Photo compliments of Transportation & Works

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